

**PRESIDENT CLINTON HIGHLIGHTS
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OF THE
DELTA REGION
Crystal Gateway Marriott, Arlington, Virginia
May 10, 2000**

Today, in Arlington, Virginia, President Clinton will kick off Delta Vision, Delta Voices: The Mississippi Delta Beyond 2000, a two-day national conference to promote economic and community development in the Mississippi Delta region. The bipartisan conference -- the largest of its kind ever assembled -- will bring together over 750 people, including Cabinet secretaries, members of Congress, state governors, and leaders and constituents from the Delta region, to discuss ways to ensure that the region shares in the nation's unprecedented prosperity. The President will release a new report by an interagency task force on recommendations for the future of the Mississippi Delta, announce new infrastructure and community investments in the region, and urge Congress to pass the Delta Regional Authority Act.

President Clinton will be joined on the speaking program by Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater and Conn Davis, a senior at East Prairie High School in East Prairie, Missouri, a rural town in the Bootheill region of southeast Missouri. Growing up in East Prairie, Conn has seen first-hand the economic and social challenges facing communities of the Delta region and also understands the importance of a good education to overcome these challenges. A star student and athlete, Conn has worked hard in school and next year plans to attend the University of Missouri - Columbia to study computer engineering and then enter medical school. Conn hopes to be able to give back to his community but fears that he may not be able to find the type of work he wants as a specialist doctor in East Prairie. He sees that more opportunities are becoming available to his community, like increased access to computers in school classrooms. He also believes that many challenges remain and the people of his community need the tools to help overcome these challenges.

Order of Speakers
Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater
Conn Davis, Student
President Clinton

###

DELTA VISION, DELTA VOICES: MISSISSIPPI DELTA BEYOND 2000
President Clinton and Vice President Gore:
Highlighting the Future Economic Development of the Delta Region
May 10, 2000

BUILDING ON 7+ YEARS OF EFFORT TO BRING PROSPERITY TO THE DELTA REGION, PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE WILL PARTICIPATE IN A NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF THE DELTA. Today, in Arlington, Virginia, President Clinton and Vice President Gore will kick off Delta Vision, Delta Voices: The Mississippi Delta Beyond 2000, a two-day national conference to promote economic and community development in the Mississippi Delta region. The bipartisan conference -- the largest of its kind ever assembled -- will bring together over 750 people, including Cabinet secretaries, members of Congress, state governors, and leaders and constituents from the Delta region, to discuss ways to ensure that the region shares in the nation's unprecedented prosperity. The President will release a new report by an interagency task force on recommendations for the future of the Mississippi Delta, announce new infrastructure and community investments in the region, and urge Congress to pass the Delta Regional Authority Act. The Vice President will unveil new economic development initiatives and participate in a town hall meeting on bringing business, technology, and empowerment to the Delta region.

THE CLINTON-GORE ADMINISTRATION HAS MADE REAL PROGRESS IN MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE DELTA. The Mississippi Delta region encompasses 7 states, 219 counties, and more than 8.3 million people. Although it has bestowed a rich cultural heritage upon our nation and contributed greatly to its productivity, this historically impoverished area still lags behind the rest of the nation in social and economic growth. To address these concerns, in 1990 the Delta Commission -- authorized by Congress and chaired by then-Governor Bill Clinton -- published a landmark report containing a 10-year plan with recommendations on revitalizing the Delta region. In the past 7+ years, the Clinton-Gore Administration has made considerable progress in meeting the goals outlined in the report and in bringing prosperity to the Delta communities. For example:

- Job Growth. The unemployment rate for the Delta region dropped from 7.5% in 1993 to 5.1% in February 2000, and approximately 80% of its counties experienced job growth over that period.
- Education. Federal education funds targeted to the Delta's high-poverty school districts have helped give students access to computers and the internet. The Administration's E-Rate

program, which helps classrooms get connected, provided over \$250 million in funding between January 1998 and July 1999 to the seven Delta states. In addition, President Clinton's Class Size Reduction Initiative has enabled the region to hire 1,500 new teachers.

- Housing. Home ownership and rental housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income people have increased. USDA has assisted 43,000 Delta households in buying or improving their homes, and has offered \$254 million in low-interest loans on more than 10,000 rental units in rural areas of the Delta. Funding to assist the homeless has more than tripled since President Clinton and Vice President Gore took office.
- Transportation. Most of the nearly 70 improvements to highways, airports, rail and port facilities recommended in the report have either been completed or substantially fulfilled, and many critical projects are underway, including strengthening and retrofitting the Interstate 40-Mississippi River Bridge; reducing congestion on the heavily traveled Interstate 55 in Memphis; and widening many arterial highways in the rural parishes of the Delta region.
- Investment. Innovations such as Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Community Development Financial Institutions have brought millions of public- and private-sector investments to the region. From 1994 to the beginning of 1999, rural Delta communities drew over \$10.2 million from EZ/EC funding, and used it to leverage \$107.4 million -- nearly 10 times as much -- from state, local, private business, and nonprofit sources.

BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ENABLE THE CITIZENS OF THE DELTA REGION TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN AMERICA'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH. Although significant progress has been made, more work remains before the Delta region can be an equal partner in our nation's economic prosperity. For example:

- Unemployment. The Delta's rural areas still lag far behind the national unemployment rate of 3.9 percent. Some rural counties suffer from unemployment rates two to three times higher than the national average.
- Inadequate Housing. Many senior citizens and minorities in the region still suffer from inadequate housing. Fifty eight percent of rural elderly renters in three of the seven Delta states are "cost-burdened", meaning that more than 30 percent of their monthly income is spent on housing. Poverty. The poverty rate in the Delta region's distressed counties is 32 percent, compared to a national rate of 13 percent, and more than half of

its 219 counties have had poverty rates higher than 20 percent for the past 40 years.

- Low Income. Per capita income in the Delta's distressed counties is only 53 percent of the national average of \$28,525.

PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE WILL ANNOUNCE KEY INITIATIVES TO INCREASE GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY TO THE DELTA REGION. As part of this Administration's longstanding commitment to the revitalization of the Delta, President Clinton and Vice President Gore will announce new investments and steps to promote the region's social and economic development, including:

- A new report by the Mississippi Delta Regional Initiative, a coalition of 20 federal agencies working with state, local, private-sector, and grassroots organizations from the Delta to promote economic and community development in the region. As a follow-up to the Delta Commission's 1990 report, today's report outlines the progress that has been made in the region, steps that still need to be taken, and recommendations for the future on ways to revitalize the regional economy, improve the quality of life, enhance tourism, protect the environment, and develop and implement regional planning. Major recommendations include creating a permanent regional planning and development entity and increasing technical assistance for the region's smallest, poorest communities by using -- circuit riders-- to help them learn about and apply for funding.
- New federal funding for the Delta Region. The President and Vice President will unveil an array of new federal investments to provide infrastructure, job training and technology, and community support to the Delta:

*Providing Infrastructure Improvements to Promote Growth
and Increase Job Access*

- \$30.7 million in critically needed USDA loans and grants to 19 communities for basic potable water systems, community facilities, and business assistance.
- \$2.75 million in grants from the Department of Commerce -- matched with \$2 million from non-federal sources -- for residential and industrial road, water and sewer projects.
- A \$5.5 million grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs to North Little Rock, Arkansas for the creation of a veterans' cemetery.

Investing in Economic Development for the Delta's Future

- A Mississippi Delta Tourism Initiative launched by the Departments of Transportation, Commerce, and the Interior to build on the \$13 billion Delta tourism industry.
- \$14.6 million in USDA loans, loan guarantees, and grants to assist businesses in the Delta region.
- \$3.7 million in Department of Labor grants for employment training and job placement centers.
- \$1.2 million in grants from the Department of Education for Community-Based Technology Centers.
- 3 additional workshops by the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund targeted to organizations serving the Delta region.
- \$210,000 in grants by the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration -- matched with \$317,167 from non-federal sources - to provide direct assistance to small businesses and to fund the design of a comprehensive economic development strategy for the 41 counties in the Arkansas Delta region.
- A new \$4 million local loan fund created by the East Arkansas Enterprise Community and the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta that will leverage an additional \$2 million from private financing sources.
- A commitment by Entergy Corporation to expand the new Delta BusinessLINC program.
- \$150,000 from the Department of Transportation to expand the MentorNet program in the Delta region.
- 6 computer kiosks displaying federal job opportunities and 15 surplus computers to Delta region high schools, donated by the Office of Personnel Management.

Strengthening Delta Families and Delta Communities

- \$100,000 in resources from the U.S. Geological Survey, and \$100,000 in software from ESRI Co. to improve accessibility to geographic and socio-economic data that will assist in regional planning.
- \$170,000 in new EPA grants to train teachers on environmental safety and to encourage farmers to use environmentally sound land management practices.
- \$224,320 in USDA grants for home-building assistance in Arkansas.
- \$495,000 in new COPS grants by the Department of Justice to expand community policing.

Calling on Congress to enact the Delta Regional Authority Act to bring meaningful and lasting change to the region. The legislation would establish the Delta Regional Authority -- a permanent regional planning and development entity to work with state and local agencies in formulating plans and programs to boost the economic conditions of local communities and to encourage private-sector involvement in the region. President Clinton's 2001 budget proposes an additional \$159 million for the Delta region: \$30 million for the creation of the Delta Regional Authority, and \$129 million in targeted funds for job creation, education, housing, small business assistance, and other community development initiatives.

**THE CLINTON-GORE ADMINISTRATION:
A 7+-YEAR RECORD OF PROMOTING GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY
IN THE DELTA REGION
May 10, 2000**

Since taking office, President Clinton and Vice President Gore have been committed to tapping the potential of the Mississippi Delta region. Even before 1993, as Governor of Arkansas, the President led the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission in its efforts to bring social and economic prosperity to a region which has historically been left behind. The President and Vice President have targeted resources and investments and worked with states, localities, and the private sector to bring capital, jobs, and opportunity to the Delta region. The following are highlights of the Clinton-Gore Administration's 7+-year record of working to revitalize Delta communities:

Providing Infrastructure Improvements to Promote Growth. Investments in infrastructure are critical to economic growth and the quality of life in the Delta region. The Clinton-Gore Administration has made investing in infrastructure a priority in its efforts to bring economic development to the region.

- Improving Highways. The Federal Highway Administration has worked closely with state governments to ensure a safe and efficient transportation infrastructure within the Delta region. Federal funding has contributed to numerous improvements in highways, roads, and other infrastructure. For example, over the last decade, Arkansas has received approximately \$140 million to complete 120 miles of highway reconstruction, surfacing, widening and other projects in Delta counties. Many more projects are underway, including strengthening and retrofitting the Interstate 40-Mississippi

River Bridge, reducing congestion on the heavily traveled Interstate 55 in Memphis, and widening many arterial highways in the rural parishes of the Delta region.

- Maintaining Airport Quality and Safety. The Federal Aviation Administration has provided over \$411 million in financial assistance to 81 airports in the Delta region from 1993 to 1999, helping to construct, develop and maintain the region's airports. Funding is used for projects which enhance the safety and quality of the airports and their surroundings, including improving runways and taxiways, remodeling terminals, and acquiring land for noise compatibility.
- Improving Water Quality Projects. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund supports low-interest loans to help communities build and upgrade sewage treatment plants and other wastewater systems. Since 1994, the Fund has provided over \$1.1 billion in low-cost financing to the seven Delta states for a range of water quality infrastructure projects.
- Providing Telephone Service. USDA's Rural Utilities Service has provided first-time telephone service to over 8,200 rural residents of the Delta region. In addition, approximately \$154 million in RUS funding has brought improved telecommunications to more than 77,000 Delta residents.
- Expanding Health Care Access and Education. In addition to funding traditional infrastructure projects, the Rural Utilities Service's Distance Learning and Telemedicine program provided \$9.8 million in grants and loans to 800,000 Delta residents for improvements in access to health care and educational opportunities in the health care field.
- Preserving the Mississippi River's Culture and History. In 1998, President Clinton designated the Lower Mississippi River as an American Heritage River to help restore and protect the environmental, economic, cultural, and historic values of the river. A "river navigator" is appointed to help Mississippi river communities identify federal programs and resources that can assist them in implementing their restoration plans.
- Investing in Economic Development for the Delta's Future. Through providing access to capital, job training, and small business assistance, the Clinton-Gore Administration has invested in the long-term economic development and prosperity of the Delta region.
- Establishing Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities. In 1994, under Vice President Gore's leadership, the Administration announced the creation of five urban and eight rural EZs and ECs in the Delta region, accounting for nearly

one-fourth of all rural EZ/ECs announced that year. The success of the program led to another EZ being added in 1999. EZ/Ecs help spur economic growth through sustainable development, local leadership, long-range planning, and community-based partnerships. From 1994 to the beginning of 1999, the Delta's rural communities drew over \$10.2 million from their EZ/EC funding, and used it to leverage \$107.4 million -- 10 times as much -- from state, local, business, and nonprofit sources.

- **Stimulating Economic Development.** The Economic Development Administration works with local governments and community groups in the Delta region to generate new jobs, help retain existing jobs, and stimulate industrial and commercial growth. Since the beginning of the Administration, the Delta region has received over \$47 million in EDA Title IX funds for projects like the Technology Economic Development Center in Madisonville, KY, a community facility offering distance learning, job training and employment services to dislocated workers and others.
- **Encouraging Community Development.** Community Development Block Grants are competitively awarded to cities, counties, and states to revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing and economic opportunities, and improve community facilities and services, primarily to benefit low- and moderate-income persons. From 1993 to 1999, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has provided \$944 million in Community Development Block Grants to support rural housing and economic development in the Delta region.
- **Supporting Rural Business.** Under USDA Rural Development's Community Facilities, Rural Business, and Water & Wastewater programs, the 219-county Delta region has received approximately \$961 million in funding since 1993. These funds are used for rural development projects like establishing community resource centers, constructing or upgrading water distribution systems; and providing loan guarantees to local businesses.

Strengthening Delta Families and Delta Communities. Some of the most vital investments are those made in the people and communities of the Delta--improving access to technology, affordable housing, and clean water are just a few of the Administration's efforts to improve the quality of life for Delta residents.

- **Targeting Education Funds.** Federal education funds targeted to the Delta's high-poverty school districts have helped give students access to computers and the Internet. The Department

of Education allocated over \$350 million in fiscal year 1998 alone to high-poverty school districts in the Delta. Under the Vice President's leadership, the Clinton-Gore Administration created the E-rate program, which secures low-cost Internet connections for schools, libraries, rural health clinics and hospitals, benefiting more than 80 percent of America's public schools. Between January 1998 and June 1999, the seven Delta states received over \$256 million in E-rate funding. And under President Clinton's Class Size Reduction Initiative, the Department of Education provided more than \$50 million to the Delta region last year to hire approximately 1,500 new teachers to reduce class size in the early grades.

- Helping Families Buy or Rent Homes. USDA has provided \$2.2 billion in loans under its Single-Family Housing Loan Program to 43,000 Delta households to buy or improve their homes. For rental housing, USDA provided more than \$254 million in low-interest loans on more than 10,000 rental units in rural areas of the Delta.
- Supporting Affordable Housing. Since President Clinton took office, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has provided \$260 million to the Delta region through the HOME Program, which helps state and local governments produce standard affordable housing for low- and very low-income families.
- Providing Opportunity and Training Workers. The Clinton-Gore Administration has provided significant resources to increase training for dislocated workers, families on welfare, and disadvantaged youth. Since 1993, the Administration has provided the seven Delta states with \$6.1 billion for Job Training Partnerships, \$267.8 million for Welfare-to-Work grants, \$27.4 million for the Youth Opportunity program, and \$239 million in Job Corps to provide training for disadvantaged youth.
- Accelerating Brownfields Clean-Up. The Clinton-Gore Administration has worked to accelerate the cleanup of brownfields -- abandoned, contaminated urban properties that face barriers to redevelopment. Since 1994, the EPA has steered more than \$1.5 million to the Delta region to assess, clean up, and redevelop abandoned brownfields sites, creating new jobs and a new tax base for dozens of Delta communities.
- Helping Communities Provide Clean Drinking Water. The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, proposed by President Clinton and enacted in 1996, supports low-interest loans to help communities build and upgrade their water treatment

systems. Since 1993, the EPA has provided the Delta region with \$39.1 million through the Fund.

- Reducing Water Pollution. Clean Water Act Section 106 grants are a primary source of funding for the prevention, reduction, and elimination of surface and groundwater pollution from point and nonpoint sources, and for improving the health of the nation's waters. The seven Delta states have received \$72.7 million in Section 106 grants since 1994.
- Controlling Polluted Runoff. Clean Water Act Nonpoint Source grants are provided to states for a variety of projects to control polluted runoff, including streambank restoration, wetlands protection, and education. Over \$138 million in Nonpoint Source grants have been awarded since 1994 to the seven Delta states.

**A COMPLETE LIST OF PRESIDENT CLINTON'S AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE'S
ANNOUNCEMENTS OF NEW INVESTMENTS TO HELP BRING
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY TO THE DELTA REGION
May 10, 2000**

At today's conference, Delta Vision, Delta Voices: Mississippi Delta Beyond 2000, President Clinton and Vice President Gore will focus national attention on the social and economic issues of the Mississippi Delta Region, and explore new ways to revitalize the region and bring it into full partnership in our nation's prosperity. The President and Vice President will unveil the following initiatives to promote social and economic development in the region:

INVESTMENTS IN BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE TO PROMOTE GROWTH AND INCREASE ACCESS TO JOBS. The following infrastructure improvements announced today by the President will help improve the economic viability of the Delta region, encourage new job creation by making it more attractive to businesses, and increase mobility and job access for its residents:

- The Department of Agriculture will award \$30.7 million in critically needed loans and grants to 19 communities for basic potable water systems, community facilities, and business assistance. These funds will benefit some of the Delta's hardest-pressed small towns and be used for necessary projects such as providing safe and adequate drinking water, purchasing firefighting and emergency rescue equipment, and repairing fire hydrants. The communities in which projects are receiving loans and grants are: White County, AR; Fulton County, AR; Fayette County, IL; Alexander and Pulaski

Counties; IL; Franklin County, IL; White County, IL; Hopkins County, KY; Avoyelles Parish, LA (2); Evangeline Parish, LA; St. Landry Parish, LA; West Carroll Parish, LA; Washington County, MO; Mississippi County, MO; Butler County, MO (2); Ozark County, MO; Ripley County, MO (2); Prentiss County, MO; Holmes County, MS (2); Leake County, MS; Panola County, MS (2); City of Tchula, MS; Lauderdale County, TN; and Somerville County, TN.

- The Department of Commerce (Economic Development Administration) will award \$2.75 million in grants, matched with \$2 million from non-federal sources, for residential and industrial road, water and sewer projects. These funds will benefit the communities of Monticello, AR; Gassville, AR; Mountain Home, AR; and West Monroe, LA by putting in place the infrastructure necessary for long-term economic growth.
- The Department of Veterans' Affairs will award a \$5.5 million grant to North Little Rock, Arkansas for the creation of a veterans' cemetery. The state veterans' cemeteries complement the national cemeteries and are critical to ensure that the burial needs of veterans are met. The VA grant, which will be awarded before the end of this fiscal year, will serve the over 100,000 veterans living within a 75-mile radius of the cemetery's 82-acre site.

INVESTMENTS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR THE DELTA'S FUTURE. In a town hall meeting, Vice President Gore announced the following commitments aimed at enabling the Delta region to increase its economic strength over the long-term:

- The Departments of Transportation, Commerce, and the Interior will launch a Mississippi Delta Tourism Initiative to build on the \$13 billion Delta tourism industry. This public-private initiative is aimed at bolstering the economic potential of tourism through the development of a regional tourism strategy. The initiative will include a national summit to be held in Arkansas this fall, underwritten by \$150,000 from ASU and the Ford Foundation; an agreement among the parties to implement the marketing plan; the possible designation of a National Delta Heritage Area to honor the region's cultural and historical significance; and a study of the region's role in the civil rights movement.
- The Department of Agriculture will award \$14.6 million in loans, loan guarantees, and grants to assist the Delta region's business community. These loans and grants will be

used to provide assistance to businesses in the Delta region, including purchasing land and equipment, construction and remodeling costs, restructuring existing debt, and providing working capital. For one business in Louisiana, this funding assistance will save 40 existing jobs. The awardees include: Arkansas Rural Water Association; Sylvanina Nursery; The Pits, Inc.; Advance Coatings Company; Lewis & Son Rice Processing Corporation; Earle Industries, Inc.; Bethel Grain Co.; Under the Magnolia Day Care; Hopkinsville Elevator; Natchez Eola, LLC. Business Assistance projects are located in: Pulaski County, IL; Saline County, IL; Salem, MO; Clairborne County, MS; Holmes County, MS; Haywood County, TN (2); and Alcorn State University.

- The Department of Labor will award \$3.7 million in grants for employment training and job placement centers. The grants will be awarded to organizations in Knoxville, TN; Grambling, LA; Rolla, MO; and Bay St. Louis, MS for programs offering job training and placement to high-risk youth and adults.
- The Department of Education will award \$1.2 million in grants for Community-Based Technology Centers. The grants -- awarded to Concordia, Franklin and Tensas Parishes, LA; Chicot County, AK; and Vicksburg, MS -- will support CTCs that provide computer access and training to adults and children from disadvantaged backgrounds, allowing them to fully participate in the Information Age.
- The Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund will target 3 program information workshops to organizations serving the Delta region, and will partner with training providers to strengthen the capacity of development finance institutions serving the Delta region. CDFIs provide critically needed financing to economically distressed areas, including loans and investments in small businesses, housing, and microbusinesses.
- The Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration will award \$210,000 in grants, matched with \$317,167 from non-federal sources, to provide direct assistance to small businesses and to fund the design of a comprehensive economic development strategy for the 41 counties in the Arkansas Delta region. Under these grants, Mississippi Valley State University and the University of New Orleans will provide technical assistance to established small businesses, small towns, and community organizations.

Arkansas State University will lead the effort to structure a region-wide economic development strategy.

- The East Arkansas Enterprise Community and the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta (ECD) will jointly create a new \$4 million local loan fund that will leverage an additional \$2 million from private financing sources. By launching this fund with ECD -- one of the nation's leading community development financial institutions -- the East Arkansas Enterprise Community will satisfy one of its key planning objectives. The fund will target financing to underserved local small businesses in the East Arkansas region.
- Entergy Corporation will expand the new Delta BusinessLINC program by recruiting another organization to serve as a BusinessLINC mentor to smaller protégé companies in the Delta region. Entergy Corporation is the lead corporate partner for Delta BusinessLINC and has worked extensively with the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta to recruit mentor organizations.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation will contribute \$150,000 to expand the MentorNet program in the Delta region. DOT will recruit 50 agency professionals by September 2000, and 100 by September 2001 to mentor female students at community colleges and historically black colleges and universities throughout the Delta region, and will encourage other federal agencies to participate. MentorNet links female engineering and science students with female mentors to provide career guidance and networking opportunities.
- The Office of Personnel Management will place in colleges and universities 6 computer kiosks displaying over 15,000 federal job opportunities daily, and will donate 15 surplus computers to Delta region high schools. The Federal Employment Information/Touch Screen Computer Kiosks will be donated to the University of Arkansas in Pine Bluff and to Alcorn State University in Lorman, Mississippi. Three surplus computers will be donated to each of the following high schools: Pine Bluff High School, Dollarway High School, and Watson Chapel High School (feeder schools to University of Arkansas), and Jefferson County High School and Port Gibson High School (feeder schools to Alcorn State University).

INVESTMENTS TO STRENGTHEN DELTA FAMILIES AND DELTA COMMUNITIES.
The Clinton-Gore Administration is committed to bringing opportunity, prosperity, and improved quality of life to Delta

families and communities. Today, the President announced following the investments:

- The U.S. Geological Survey will contribute \$100,000 in resources, and ESRI Co. will contribute \$100,000 in software, toward a public-private partnership to improve accessibility to geographic and socio-economic data that will assist in regional planning. The partnership will include the USGS, the University of New Orleans, the Greater New Orleans Regional Planning Commission, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, ESRI Co., and others. Through the partnership, scientists and urban and community planners will be able to share digital data and technology - including information on water quality and land use, digital maps, and geographic information systems software -- to assist planners in making environmentally sound, economically beneficial decisions about growth.
- The EPA will award \$170,000 in new grants to train teachers on environmental safety and to encourage farmers to use environmentally sound practices. A \$70,000 grant will be given to Mississippi Valley State University for teacher training on environmental health, hazardous wastes, and the use of Geographic Information Systems to better understand the relationship between human health and the environment. A \$100,000 grant will be awarded through EPA's Clean Water Action Plan to assist Delta farmers in using environmentally sound practices that conserve, restore, and enhance natural resources.
- The Department of Agriculture will award \$224,320 for home-building assistance in Arkansas. This Self-Help Housing Technical Assistance grant from USDA Rural Development will provide necessary funding to assist 20 families in building homes throughout Lee County.
- The Justice Department will issue \$495,000 in new COPS grants to expand community policing. The COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) program has been instrumental in helping communities to cut crime nationwide. These new grants will be awarded to Helena, AK and Greenwood, LA to put more police officers on the streets. These funds are in addition to the \$2.98 million in COP grants that were announced in April.

**CLINTON-GORE ADMINISTRATION 2001 BUDGET PROPOSALS:
FOSTERING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA**

May 10, 2000

President Clinton and Vice President Gore are committed to bringing economic prosperity to the Mississippi Delta region and other areas of the country which have not benefited from the nation's soaring economy. In the Delta region, poverty remains at 175 percent of the national average and over half of the counties have had poverty rates over 20 percent for the past four decades. The per capita income in the Delta's distressed communities is only 53 percent of the U.S. average. To address these problems, the President's 2001 budget proposes \$159 million to increase specifically economic opportunities in the Mississippi Delta region, including \$30 million to create a new Delta Regional Authority to bring the resources of a federal-state partnership to the fight for economic growth in the region. This partnership will help provide the infrastructure and job training needed to make prosperity a reality in the Delta.

Establishing a Delta Regional Authority

Targeting Distressed Areas: The Delta Regional Authority's funding will be targeted to the counties with the highest poverty and unemployment rates, and lowest per capita income. The DRA will include:

- \$25 million for area development such as distressed counties programs, physical infrastructure and job training; \$3 million for assistance to participating state and local economic development entities; and
- \$2 million for technical assistance and administrative expenses. **Fostering a Coordinated Effort:** The Delta Regional Authority will foster close coordination between State and local officials and the Federal government, led by the Federal Co-Chair appointed by the President. The Governors of the seven member States will serve as DRA members, with one Governor elected to serve as the States' Co-Chair. This can be accomplished through authorizing legislation that has been introduced in the House and Senate.

Providing \$107 Million in Targeted Economic Development Assistance for the Delta Region

Supporting Rural Housing and Economic Development: The Department of Housing and Urban Development will provide \$22 million in Community Development Block Grants to support rural housing and economic development. Funding will be awarded through a competitive process for economic revitalization and community development initiatives in the Delta region.

Improving Public Works and Infrastructure: The Commerce Department will provide \$10 million through targeted Economic Development Administration funding for public works and infrastructure grants. These grants require a State or local match, except in extremely distressed communities.

Increasing Funds for Transportation Improvements: The Transportation Department will provide a total of \$69 million in funding targeted to the Delta region, including:

- \$48 million for new bridge and highway infrastructure in the Delta, including \$25 million specifically for I-69 and the Great River Bridge;
- \$20 million in transit funds, consisting of \$15 million from the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grants program for public transit buses and bus facilities to provide affordable transportation and \$5 million from FTA's Access to Jobs and Reverse Commute Grants to promote vanpools, new bus routes, and other transportation alternatives; and
- \$1 million from Federal Highway Administration administrative funds for technical assistance, including training on Federal programs and developing a tourism marketing plan and a regional transportation plan -- with efforts toward these goals to begin this year.

Supporting Rural Business: The Department of Agriculture will provide \$6 million in funding to support rural businesses, including:

- \$4 million for the Intermediary Relending Program, which finances loans to intermediary borrowers who in turn re-lend the funds to rural businesses, community development corporations, and others for the purpose of improving rural economic opportunity--the \$4 million represents loan subsidy costs and would support a loan level of \$8 million; and
- \$2 million for Partnership Technical Assistance grants, to help underserved communities create strategic plans, better use USDA's Rural Development grant and loan programs, create jobs, improve the quality of life, and build strong, sustained economic growth. These grants will be run through the Rural Business Opportunity Grant Program.

Investing \$22 Million in the People of the Delta Region

Providing Training for Dislocated Workers: The Department of Labor will provide resources through the Dislocated Worker

Employment and Training Program, which provides core services, intensive services, training and support to help dislocated workers return to work as quickly as possible. The Labor Department will partner with the Departments of Commerce, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Education, and Health and Human Services to support the Delta Regional Authority activities by providing as much as \$5 million in dislocated worker grants for qualified applications from the seven states and 219 counties comprising the Mississippi Delta region.

Providing Technology Training for Teachers: The Education Department will provide \$10 million for a targeted demonstration project to provide technology training to middle-school teachers in the seven-state Mississippi Delta region. Research suggests that middle school is an especially critical time for students to learn the technology-related Skills they will need to succeed in today's economy. The program will use a "train-the-trainers" approach by training a small number of teachers from each school who can then be technology leaders, serve as resident experts, and assist other teachers in their schools or districts.

Increasing Access to Quality Health Services: The Department of Health and Human Services will provide \$7 million through the Health Resources and Services Administration's Rural Health Outreach program for grants to fund rural health clinics in the Mississippi Delta region. This request will fund up to 30 new Rural Health Outreach grants, and will support a wide range of services in the Delta region including primary care, dental care, mental health services and emergency care. Each grant will require participation by a consortium of three or more providers, which will encourage the development of shared services arrangements among providers and new networks of care in the Delta region.